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AUTHOR Sorensen, Carol; Hoffmann, Donald; Boinczan, Joseph
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a cross-graded, thematic, interdisciplinary unit which grew from a Native American humanities unit. The 9-week unit addresses the plurality of intelligences, allows for cognitive bypassing and challenges students in critical thinking modalities. With a focus on the five groups of Native Americans (The Eastern Woodlands, Plains, West, Southwest, and Far North), the basic content was discipline-based, parallel, or multidisciplinary instruction with team teaching among science and math teachers and language arts and social studies teachers. The paper explains the steps in the planning process and the integrated and interactive work accomplished. Throughout the project, student interest was high, discipline problems were practically non-existent, and content was retained. (EH)

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NATIVE AMERICAN INTERDISCIPLINARY UNIT

BY

CAROL SORENSEN
DONALD HOFFMANN
JOSEPH BOINCZAN

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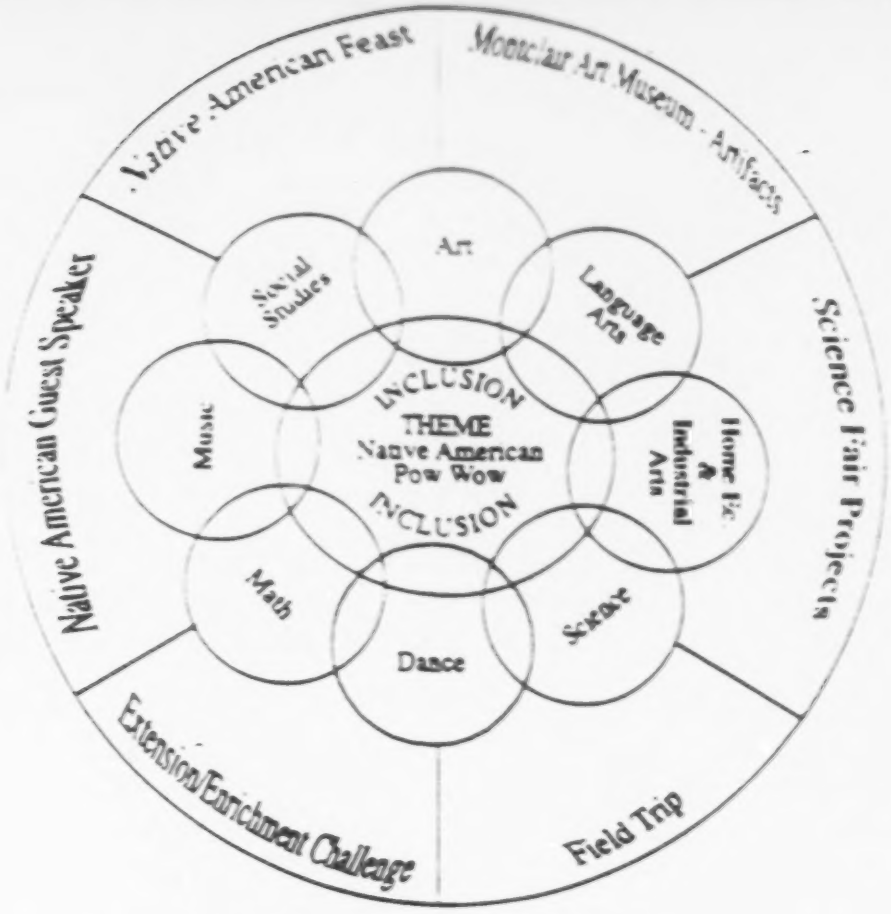

"Come to the edge of the cliff," he said
"We're afraid," they said
"Come to the edge of the cliff," he said
"We're afraid," they said
"Come to the edge of the cliff," he said
They came.
He pushed.
They flew.

Guillaume Appolinaire

This profoundly simple verse, the essence of which is what our principal did to us, marked the beginning of our evolution from single-minded, discipline-based teachers to those who could sample the educational palette, design meaningful activities, and make learning come alive.

We began our evolution, as do all organisms, by taking small, seemingly insignificant steps: reading journals, attending workshops,

communicating with our administrators, mapping our curriculum horizontally and vertically, and then planning mini-units. We made mistakes, we corrected them, and we learned.

The diagram on the first page is the unit that we wish to submit, our Native American Pow Wow. Our Pow Wow was a cross-graded, thematic, interdisciplinary unit which emerged and grew from a Native American humanities unit. Since our "house" is an open house-no interior barricades-a school without walls-we had plenty of room to accomplish our goals-design, develop, execute, and authentically assess a cross-graded, interdisciplinary, thematic unit, a cultural adventure for our house. As we sat to map out our project, it became increasingly obvious that we were doing more than planning a nine week unit; we were developing a mode of instruction that would address the plurality of intelligence, allow for cognitive bypassing, and challenge students in critical thinking modalities.

The key factor to the success of the Pow Wow was planning, planning, and more planning. We wanted to investigate five groups of Native Americans: The Eastern Woodlands, Plains, West, Southwest, and Far North. Prior to our tribal workshops, all our students needed some basic content and this we accomplished with discipline based, parallel, or multidisciplinary instruction. The math and science teachers frequently team taught, as did the language arts and social studies teachers, with our inclusion specialist moving freely from area to area as the need dictated.

Basic Content

Science
biomes, topography, climate

Math
graphing, percentages, statistics

Social Studies
history, daily life, culture

Language Arts
legends, myths, journal writing

Inclusion
focus, direct, and re-teach to special needs students

After we established our content, we then began to plan what would become a nine week cultural odyssey. We wanted to actively engage our students, allow for creative expression, challenge thinking with issue-related subtopics, and provide springboards for future investigations.

By incorporating art, music, dance, home economics, and industrial arts into our vend diagram, we provided opportunities for student excellence congruent with the theory of multiple intelligences. Additional planning forced us to expand our diagram even further.

When the preliminary planning was complete, we needed to focus all activities with a series of specific targets, i.e. housing, transportation, religious beliefs, arts, customs, tribal dances, tribal music, traditional food, agriculture, hunting, clothing, jewelry, farming, war, or hunting implements, and legends/fables.

Interspersed throughout our house we established kiosks or learning centers where we grouped reference materials, arts and crafts supplies, and audio visual equipment. Every child had equal access to all materials.

Our 108 students were then randomly divided into the five Native American groups that we wanted to investigate. Since there were five of us, we each became a part of a Native American group. Each us then took our Native American group into different areas of the "house". Each group of students decided which tribes of that main group that they wanted to become. The teacher then divided the students into cooperative groups (tribes) and directions were given in terms of an authentic task. "You are members of the _____ tribe. You are to present and depict all facets (target points) of your tribe in preparation for our Native American Pow Wow."

In the ensuing weeks, students were active participants in their education. As we looked about the house, we saw students researching data, making sand paintings, constructing totem poles, choreographing dances, making masks and jewelry, weaving rugs, sewing clothing, using computers, practicing speeches, and prepping their wisdom keepers. Teachers interacted in each tribe (cooperative group) by focusing and redirecting efforts.

Our biggest and only problem was in getting the students to leave- they wanted to keep working. As far as the students were concerned, there was never enough time to work on these tasks which they were obviously enjoying. All we know is that every teacher should have this kind of problem.

Integrated and interactive work continued. We planned a trip to the Newark Museum to study Native American culture. Students engrossed in enrichment activities comparing and contrasting the issues of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project which forced Cree Indians from sacred homelands, with an approved hometown rail link displacing local residents, some of whom were students in our house. Other students used

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their Native American studies as a springboard for Science Fair projects. An example of an award winning science fair project was the comparison of the steadfastness of Native American dyes to modern dyes.

Our day long culminating event, the Native American Pow Wow, was a spectacular event. We invited a guest speaker, a Native American himself, to officially commence our Pow Wow. Tribes, dressed in ceremonial attire, sat cross-legged on the floor as the keynote speaker's incantations echoed throughout the house. The docents from our local museum brought artifacts. As tribes were cycled through their presentations, other tribes were preparing their tribal foods to be shared by all at our feast.

Prior to the feast, each tribe had to present the history, culture, and customs of their people at the campfire. This took our breath away. Students, both boys and girls, danced, Wisdom Keepers spun their tales, kachina dolls came to life, and the sounds of drums rhythmically punched holes through the silence. We were no longer students and teachers; we were Native Americans.

Following the presentations, we ate and drank as Native Americans. Black bean soup, fry bread, salmon, corn chowder, and honey drinks were a few of the delicacies enjoyed by all.

We invited parents, teachers, administrators, and community members to our special day. They were spectators to presentations, cycled through the docents, and guests at our feast.

We assessed the unit in a variety of ways. Initially, we tested and quizzed for content. We also designed assessments/rubrics to measure process and content. We filmed the events to serve as videotape portfolios exemplary of the "best work". Lastly, we asked students to complete a self-evaluation so that they could internalize any deficiencies and set higher standards for future work.

Throughout the project, student interest was high, discipline problems were for all intents and purposes non-existent, and content was retained, as proven by subsequent examination.

Mother Earth and Father Sky were proud!

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ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

108 Students
- 5 Regions (Teacher choice)
  - Southwest
  - Plains
  - Eastern Woodlands
  - Far West
  - Northwest
- 20 Students/group & 1 Teacher
  - Racial and gender balance
  - Cross graded

TIME SCHEDULE

Discipline Based Instruction - 2 to 3 weeks
Tribal Workshops - 2 weeks
Days 1 - 9
- Period 1 - 3 Interdisciplinary Activities
- Period 7 - Alternate Math/Language Arts Basic Instruction

Day 10 - Pow Wow - Culminating Activities (See special schedule)

SCHEDULE FOR POW WOW

8:00 - 9:00	Dressing, Grouping, Directions
9:00 - 9:45	1. Students Conference for their Presentations 2. Students rotate through presentation by docents from Montclair Art Museum
9:45 - 12:45	Student Presentations by Tribe
12:45 - 1:45	Native American Feast Prepared by Students
1:45 - 2:15	Clean-up

NATIVE AMERICAN PROJECT NAME OF GROUP _____

USING THE MATERIALS PROVIDED IN THE CLASSROOM, THE GLENFIELD LIBRARY, THE MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU , PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR YOUR TRIBES IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES. PROJECTS ARE EXAMPLES AND OPEN TO YOUR OWN INTERPRETATION.

1. HABITAT: USE A MAP AND PICTURES AND/OR DRAWINGS TO GIVE SOME IDEAS OF THE TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THESE NATIVE AMERICANS LIVED. INCLUDE THE TYPES OF ANIMALS THAT MIGHT BE FOUND IN THE REGION AND WELL AS PLANTLIFE.
PROJECT: PREPARE A DIORAMA MURAL DEPICTING THE BIOME. COMPILE STATISTICS, GRAPH PERCENTAGES OF NUMBERS OF ANIMALS PRESENT AND COMPARE TO THE PRESENT.

2. FOOD: WHAT FOODS WERE CONSUMED BY THE PEOPLE OF YOUR AREA, AND HOW DID THEY ACQUIRE THIS FOOD? HOW DID THEY PREPARE THEIR FOOD?
PROJECT: PREPARE A SAMPLING OF FOOD THAT WAS POPULAR WITH THE PEOPLE OF YOUR TRIBE. WAS THEIR DIET NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED ACCORDING TO MODERN RESEARCH? COMPARE AND CONTRAST.

3. CLOTHING: WHAT DID THE PEOPLE WEAR? WHERE DID THEY GET THEIR CLOTHING? USE PICTURES, DRAWINGS, OR MAKE SOME SAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE THE STYLES.
PROJECT: SEW OR MAKE YOUR OWN CLOTHING AND COME DRESSED AS A MEMBER OF YOUR TRIBE.

4. SHELTER: WHAT KINDS OF HOMES WERE FOUND IN THIS AREA? WHY DID THEY CHOOSE TO BUILD THEIR HOMES THE WAY THEY DID? WHAT MATERIALS DID THEY USE?
PROJECT: BUILD A MODEL OF A TYPICAL HOUSE.

5. TRANSPORTATION: HOW DID THEY MOVE OVER LONG DISTANCES? HOW DID THEY CARRY GOODS? IF THEY USED SOMETHING SPECIAL, PROVIDE A DIAGRAM OF THIS IMPLEMENT.
PROJECT: MAKE A MODEL OF WHATEVER WAS USED FOR TRANSPORTATION. RESEARCH AND MAP MIGRATION ROUTES.

6. GOVERNMENT: DESCRIBE THEIR SYSTEM OF ORGANIZATION. HOW WERE THEIR LAWS MADE AND WHAT RIGHTS DID THE PEOPLE HAVE? WHAT ROLE DID WOMEN PLAY IN THEIR GOVERNMENT?
PROJECT: ORGANIZE YOUR GROUP INTO THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF A NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBE.

7. RECREATION: WHAT DID THEY DO FOR ENJOYMENT? DID THEY HAVE SPECIAL GAMES OR SPORTS? WHAT TOYS DID THE CHILDREN ENJOY?
PROJECT: EXPLAIN, ILLUSTRATE, AND PLAY A GAME THAT WAS POPULAR AND/OR MAKE SOME OF THE EQUIPMENT THAT WAS USED IN THE VARIOUS SPORTS AND GAMES.

8. ART, DANCE, AND MUSIC: WHAT INSTRUMENTS DID THE PEOPLE MAKE? WHAT TYPES OF MUSIC DID THEY HAVE? MAKE SOME INSTRUMENTS OR PROVIDE PICTURES TO ILLUSTRATE YOUR INFORMATION.
HOW WAS DANCE USED IN THEIR CULTURE?
PROJECT: CHOREOGRAPH A DANCE AND ACCOMPANY YOUR DANCE WITH AUTHENTIC MUSIC. MAKE INSTRUMENTS THAT THEY USED. CREATE MALE VS. FEMALE ART WORKS.

9. RELIGION: WHAT DID THE PEOPLE BELIEVE? NAME THEIR GODS AND EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH. WHAT SPECIAL FESTIVALS/HOLIDAYS DID THEY OBSERVE?
PROJECT: READ, WRITE, AND PERFORM A NATIVE AMERICAN MYTH.

10. THE FAMILY: WHAT ROLES DID EACH MEMBER OF THE FAMILY PLAY? HOW DID THEY EDUCATE THE CHILDREN? HOW WERE CHILDREN DISCIPLINED? WHAT SPECIAL CEREMONIES DID THE CHILDREN EXPERIENCE AS THEY MOVED TO ADULTHOOD? WHAT WERE THEIR IDEAS ON MARRIAGE?
PROJECT: ROLE PLAY SOME ASPECT OF DAILY LIFE.

11. OTHER INFORMATION: IF YOU FIND OTHER INFORMATION THAT REALLY DOES NOT FIT INTO ANY ONE OF THESE CATEGORIES, INCLUDE IT AS A SEPARATE SECTION. (FOR EXAMPLE-WAR AND WEAPONS, DEATH)
PROJECTS: 1. MAKE A WEAPON OR INSTRUMENT USED FOR HUNTING.
2. PREPARE A CHART SHOWING THEIR SIGNS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THEIR SYSTEM OF WRITING.
3. CREATE SOME ARTIFACTS OF THE REGION: TOTEM POLES, DOLLS, BASKETS, ETC.

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